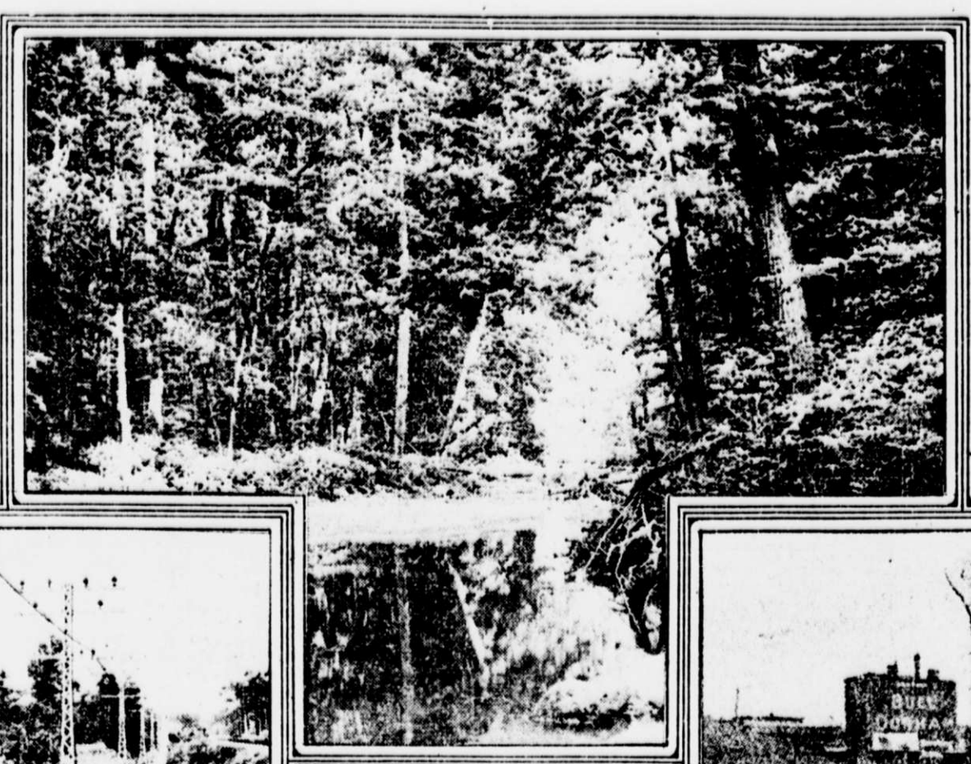
BEAUTIFUL NEW PARKWAY ALONG THE BRONX

After Seven Years Commission Advises Acquisition of Land

A MAGNIFICENT new parkway for New York, fifteen miles long, seems to be not only possible, but a future probability, judging from the report of the Bronx Parkway commission, which has just been completed. The cost they estimate to be about $4,000,000.

Measures for the reclamation or otherwise protecting the Bronx River from pollution have been discussed for many years. In 1895 a commission was appointed to investigate the feasibility of constructing a sewer along the valley of the Bronx River through Westchester county and the upper portion of the city to carry off the sewerage and prevent the pollution of the stream. River conditions were then less urgent and Westchester county, then



Primeval Forest Along the River in the Old Garth Place

Meadow Below Chambers Crossing

Another View Near Bronx Park

almost rural in character, was little interested, so the project failed.

In the year 1905 the New York Zoological Society proposed legislative action for the appointment of a commission to acquire the lands adjoining the Bronx River extending from Bronx Park to Kensico Reservation, the purpose being to save the river and incidentally create a parkway. A commission was appointed by Gov. Higgins. The original commissioners were Madison Grant, James G. Cannon and Dave H. Morris; William W. Niles was appointed secretary, and J. Warren Thayer engineer.

After a full investigation the commission presented a unanimous report, urging the great importance of protecting the Bronx River from pollution. It report showed the feasibility of accomplishing this through acquiring the low and then practically valueless river lands for a parkway reservation; and that this would be the cheapest and most expedient means of restoring the present polluted river and eliminating nuisance conditions.

In 1907 a permanent commission was appointed by Gov. Hughes, consisting of Madison Grant, representing the Borough of Manhattan; William W. Niles, representing the Borough of The Bronx, and James G. Cannon, representing Westchester county. It is this commission whose favorable report has just been completed.

The report sets forth in detail the history, need of protecting the Bronx River and proposed plans for its protection and preservation. The primary object is the regulation and control from a sanitary and economic point of view of the floods of water that at intervals sweep down the Bronx Valley.

All proposed solutions of the problem heretofore made involve far greater expense than the proposed parkway, as well as the loss to the city of increases in assessed valuations of adjoining property, and the opportunity to create a superb parkway. If the river did not exist the parkway still would have to be constructed to connect the existing city park system with the city's lands acquired in Westchester and Putnam counties for water supply purposes, amounting to nearly 30,000 acres and costing with hydraulic works approximately $130,000,000.

The commission has been able to acquire by donation from public spirited owners of adjoining uplands strips of land including the river bed itself, which added together make a continuous strip of more than four and one-half miles in addition to donations of other lands of great value for parkway purposes. Options for twice as much more land have been obtained at less than market value.

The proposed parkway reservation includes public streets, city lands, right of way of Kensico aqueduct, owned by the city but not now available for park purposes, and other lands amounting to approximately 1,230 acres.

While the value of the lands to be acquired appears to be $5,700,000 the commission desires to provide a suitable margin of safety and to provide for the possible cost of condemnation if, in some cases, such expensive and troublesome proceedings become necessary. They therefore estimate that the cost of acquiring the total reservation at the present time, including a substantial sum for protection of existing park features, planting and replanting of denuded districts, straightening of the river for flood regulation and sanitary measures against pollution, will be about $4,000,000.

Thus the city of New York has the opportunity offered it to acquire, at a cost of $4,000,000, including the cost of preliminary protection, preservation and development, the necessary land for a superb parkway system more than fifteen miles in length, extending from Bronx Park to Kensico Lake, and embracing an area of 1,130 acres.

"The Bronx River," says the report, "is highly polluted with sewage and other decomposing matter which reaches it along its entire length from the Kensico reservoir to its outlet in the East River. With insufficient current to carry off this pollution it is rapidly becoming an open sewer. The low meadow and marsh lands are always water charged and at seasons overflowed, depositing animal and vegetable matters, which decompose, making the entire river bottoms unfit for habitation. This greatly exaggerates the detrimental conditions usually met along railroads, with the result that through the city portion and in the towns building up above there is a low class of development, and noxious conditions are rapidly extending to the great injury of property values and normal city growth.

"These already constitute an intolerable nuisance and serious menace to public health, which are in danger of being neglected until some disastrous epidemic shall bring it forcibly to the attention of the public.

"On the other hand the Bronx River is of great utilitarian and aesthetic value to the future city population.

"It is the largest stream in the metropolitan district. The national Government is at present engaged in making the lower tidal outlet of the river navigable to West Farms; but the portion under consideration flowing through the Zoological Park, Botanical Gardens and above is a comparatively shallow stream, except in freshets, and not suited to improvement for commerce. The upper portion above the present city line extends through a most picturesque valley and delightful surroundings. Above Bronx Park and at Mount Vernon, Bronxville and northerly from White Plains to the Kensico Reservoir its channel winds through old erosion bottoms, widening from 300 to 1,000 feet between the Harlem Railroad and the line of the Kensico Aqueduct. The Westchester county section is still picturesque and unspoiled, abounding in scenic and park features. According to Prof. Britton, the valley of the Bronx River contains over 1,000 species of native plants and trees and affords a great opportunity for preserving its natural beauty and interest for the future population of the city.

"We are informed that these city lands, exclusive of the Catskill watershed properties, now aggregate nearly 30,000 acres and represent an expenditure of $130,000,000, which thereby become available for the ultimate development of a world renowned outer park system in the city's most fascinating adjacent territory which will be commensurate with the future metropolis.

"In addition to the increase of the park system of New York the advantage to local communities is doubly accentuated in the fact that it will not be merely a community adjunct but it will follow along the railroad through the entire electric zone, immediately at hand from every station. It will afford direct communication extending through the heart of these communities and become a progress factor the value of which is difficult to estimate to this future city territory.

"With the large Kensico Lake reservation as an objective point we have only to picture the extension of the Riverside Drive improvement along the Hudson River and the similar development of a line along the Sound to complete the connection needed for a most comprehensive outer park system. The Bronx River Parkway will be the main connecting link and principal feature.

"The Palisades Interstate Park Commission, which was engaged in the construction of a parkway lying along the westerly bank of the Hudson River on a similar scale, has recently had its jurisdiction extended to Newburgh and westerly to include the Ramapo mountains. It has received the gift of the Harriman Park lands of some 10,000 acres together with subscriptions from individuals amounting to $2,500,000 and further appropriations of $2,500,000 from the State of New York and $500,000 from the State of New Jersey for acquisition of additional lands and park development.

"The proposed Bronx parkway will provide through connecting State roads to Tarrytown and ferry to Nyack, best access to the Harriman and Palisades Park lands. Then with further connections to the city's Catskill watershed land who can pronounce too ambitious our forecast for the world's most magnificent outer park system?

"In determining the limits of the reservation, particularly in the three miles through the city, no property is taken except the low river lands, and on the adjacent slope for 100 feet only. The lands are not occupied or adapted for wholesome development and it is found that the area thus physically defined includes practically the entire zone of nuisance which it is desired to eliminate.

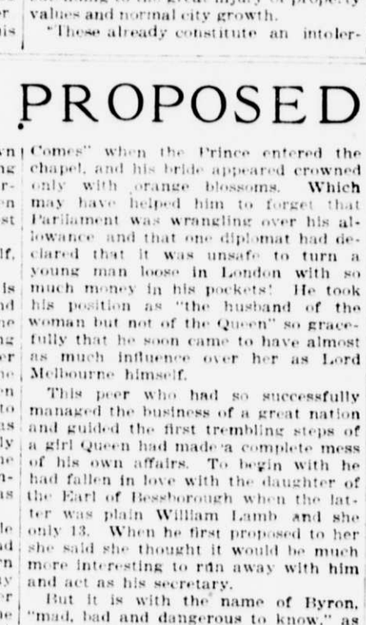
"While New York city has been famed the world over for its splendid park developments it is now surpassed by the city of Boston in the total acreage and comprehensive scope of its park system. The city of Chicago is acquiring extensive areas for a new outer park system, anticipating her growth for twenty years and a population increased to 8,000,000, and similar progress might be cited in all of our large American cities.

"Thus far practically no provision is being made for parks or open reservations in the city's northerly suburbs. Pelham Bay Park when purchased was situated entirely beyond the city bounds and the lower Westchester county section will in the not distant future also be absorbed in its limits."

Concerning this proposed magnificent new parkway, Mr. Charles D. Lay, a well known landscape architect, says:

"From an engineering standpoint it is quite obvious that this parkway, which will provide for regulating the river in time of freshet, will save the enormous cost of a trunk sewer, which, to take the storm water, would have to be very large.

"From the aesthetic point of view, the need for the improvement is so pressing that one wonders that it was not done twenty-five years ago."



Map Showing Proposed Bronx River Parkway

WOMEN OF NOTE WHO HAVE PROPOSED

WHEN Cupid plans to make some merry maiden happy he is sure of at least one helper. She may not come right out into the open and say so, but no mortal woman is going to see the little god's efforts fail for lack of encouragement at the right moment. Leap year is only a survival from the times when after marriage by capture and marriage by purchase it came to be marriage by choice, and frequently the woman's choice at that.

Not that the suitor always accepted. Phaon calmly turned up his nose at Sappho, though she was one of the brilliant women in the dawning of the greatest century of Greek art and literature. She had a school for women at Mitylene and was already writing the poetry that Solon later committed to memory as a relaxation when she met the young soldier. But all her philosophy could not sweeten his indifference, and she cast herself in despair from the Leucadian rock.

Two thousand years of changing fashions in proposals did not make Matilda, daughter of the Count of Flanders, a better matrimonial loser; but circumstances played into her hands. She had a suitor she didn't want as well as one she couldn't get. The one she didn't want happened to be William the Conqueror, and he decided to go to Bruges and conquer Matilda. There were no automobile roads through France in those days and William doubtless had a hard trip. Perhaps Matilda noticed the mud upon his clothes when she came out of church and found him waiting for her. At any rate William descended from his horse and taking Matilda firmly by the back of the neck rolled her over and over in the mire of Bruges, planting well directed blows upon her royal face and body with his other hand.

This strenuous love making appealed to Matilda. Perhaps it was what she would have liked to do to Brihric, the gentleman she couldn't get, who was only English Ambassador at her father's court and not at all a proper person to be snubbing a princess. So Matilda sent word to her father that "sick in health and dolorous in body," she had firmly resolved to marry no man but Duke William.

Later, after William had conquered England, he offered his Queen the estates of any English noble she might name. Matilda did not have to think twice. She not only chose Brihtric's estates, but she put him in prison and kept him there all the rest of his life. Which may have marked the beginning of a movement to restrict woman's choice to one year in four.

A later soldier did not show William's grasp of the situation—and the lady. He even lacked the spirit to do his own proposing and sent a most unwilling deputy. The messenger must have performed his task satisfactorily, for when he had finished the lady could suggest only one improvement.

"Why don't you speak for yourself, John?" she asked.

Sometimes the task of proposing is forced upon an unwilling lady, and hands which have learned to hold the sceptre steadily falter when proffering the ring. Queen Victoria postponed her marriage for three years in spite of the protestations of her Ministers, and when Prince Albert of Coburg was invited to London he did not know that it was anything more than merely a friendly visit, such as he had often made to the lonely little cousin over whose unconscious head the crown of England was settling.

On one of the last of these visits while they were riding through the forest and the lady in waiting was around a turn in the path he pulled a ring with a tiny diamond out of his pocket and told her with a lordly schoolboy air that when he was old enough he would marry her. But it was only a few months later that she was called downstairs in her bare feet and her white nightgown to greet the messenger who knelt to her as Queen of England.

So the little ring was laid aside, though not forgotten, for if one were the greatest lady in the land with princes kneeling all about, it might be pleasant to remember that one had been beloved as a little Cinderella of a princess.

The Queen's first intimation to Prince Albert that her intentions were serious was a flower from her bouquet. She had given a great ball in honor of him and his brother, but that was demanded by court etiquette. The flower was not. The Prince had no buttonhole in which to wear it, but he promptly cut one in the lapel of his uniform.

Three days later on his return from an early morning hunt he found a message that the Queen would receive him in her boudoir. There, as he afterward wrote to his mother, she told him in a "genuine burst of affection that he had won her heart, and she hoped he would make the sacrifice of sharing his life with her, for she considered it a sacrifice to have to leave his own country."

The hardest part of the proposal came later. It was one thing to tell her old playmate that she loved him and quite another to explain to a group of elderly Privy Councillors that she had done so. "I was so embarrassed," she wrote of this ordeal, "that I could see only a miniature of Albert which I wore on my wrist and my dear Lord Melbourne with his eyes full of tears."

She made things as easy for the Prince as she could, and when the Archbishop of Canterbury asked her whether he should omit the word obey she informed him sharply that she was being married as a woman and not as a Queen! The organ played "See the Conquering Hero Comes" when the Prince entered the chapel, and his bride appeared crowned only with orange blossoms. Which may have helped him to forget that Parliament was wrangling over his allowance and that one diplomat had declared that it was unsafe to turn a young man loose in London with so much money in his pockets! He took his position as "the husband of the woman but not of the Queen" so gracefully that he soon came to have almost as much influence over her as Lord Melbourne himself.

This peer who had so successfully managed the business of a great nation and guided the first trembling steps of a girl Queen had made a complete mess of his own affairs. To begin with he had fallen in love with the daughter of the Earl of Bessborough when the latter was plain William Lamb and she only 13. When he first proposed to her she said she thought it would be much more interesting to run away with him and act as his secretary.

But it is with the name of Byron, "mad, bad and dangerous to know," as she herself at first described him, that the name of Lady Caroline Lamb is chiefly associated. She had been wild to meet him when the publication of "Childe Harold" lifted him to fame overnight.

"He has a club foot and bites his nails," warned one friend, but this description failed to frighten Lady Caroline.

She fell madly in love with him and the sight of her waiting for him outside the house while he was at a party to which she did not happen to be asked was a scandal to those who were unwatched for. Her mother finally took her to Ireland to end her infatuation, and from there she wrote Byron imploring him to fly with her. He replied that he did not think it best and that they ought to forget each other. But he added politely that he would of course fly whenever and wherever she wished.

"Little Caro," as she was called, misunderstood this "Delighted to have met you," and instead of replying that the 'pleasure had been hers, good-by," she proceeded to set a time and place for the elopement. Whereupon Byron wrote her briefly, for pity's sake to leave him in peace. She never forgave him, though he later married her husband's cousin and the whole family treated the matter as a joke. But years later she passed a funeral procession and fainted when she learned that it was Byron's.

It may be that poets attract proposals, for the American who is most like Byron also received one. It was after Edgar Allan Poe had failed as a student at the University of Virginia and as a cadet at West Point—they now have marble tablets to him in both places—that he went to Baltimore to live with his aunt, Mrs. Clemm, and her little daughter, Virginia. He became entirely devoted to the pretty, light hearted child. He was writing only fugitive bits of things for the Baltimore papers but later had an offer of a permanent place on the staff of the *Southern Literary Messenger* in Richmond. There he fell in love with Eliza White, the youngest daughter of the editor, but when his aunt wrote him that "Sissy's" health was breaking down through her grief over his absence he went back and married her.

She was not 14 at the time, though her marriage certificate said that she was 21. She was not intellectual ever, as a woman, and Poe once told a friend that she had never read all his poems. But she was devoted to him and they were happy in spite of dire poverty until she developed consumption and died in a cottage at Fordham so bare of food and fire that she was kept warm during the last days only by her husband's old West Point overcoat and the pet cat which nestled in her arms.

The man who stood in need of reforming has always seemed fair game to the leap year lady. There was the Wisconsin statesman who apeared intoxicated at a public meeting and was reproached therefor by a young woman of his acquaintance.

"Oh, well," he defended himself, "nobody cares."

"Yes, they do. All your friends do. And the State has a right to your best services."

"Well, if I had some one person—some good woman—perhaps really to care, I might be a credit to my country," he parried unsuspectingly.

"Very well,' she replied. "I will marry you. I have always cared for you, and I will do my best to help you to be a credit to yourself." So they were married, and really and truly lived happily ever afterward.

A case where bodily and not moral weakness brought happiness was that of Sergeant Thomas Plunkett of the Twenty-first Massachusetts Regiment during the civil war. In a charge at Fredericksburg the color bearer was among the first to fall. Seizing the flag Sergeant Plunkett bore it almost over the ramparts, where he fell with both arms shot away.

When the news was carried to his sweetheart, so the story goes, she protested that she could never marry him. "Then I'll be proud to," declared her sister. They were married as soon as he recovered. He was voted a medal by Congress and made a messenger in the Massachusetts State House, where he served for many years.

THE QUEEN TAKES THE TRICK.

THE CHARM OF POESY.

LEAP YEAR.